

As part of the discussion on "Practical Paths to Reliable Energy" at this year's ICIE conference, presenters discussed the use of heat for industrial processes, which would be provided by the Next Generation Nuclear Plant (NGNP).

Idaho leaders ponder practical paths to reliable electricity

by [Marilyn Whitney](#), INL Communications & Governmental Affairs

Earnest consideration of electricity sources and prices is no longer limited to utility executives and policy wonks. Economic frugality and environmental stewardship have now put the issue squarely in the sights of small business owners and average citizens.

Nearly 100 representatives from business, power utilities and government agencies recently converged in Boise, Idaho, to discuss "Practical Paths to Reliable Electricity." The group gathered at this year's annual [Idaho Council on Industry and the Environment](#) (ICIE) conference. Idaho National Laboratory co-sponsored the conference, which focused on Idaho's current and future electricity needs.

Speakers and panelists discussed the resources available to address projected increases in electricity demand, the use of traditional and renewable resources in meeting future loads, and new technology and trends in electricity generation. The two-day conference also included discussions about pending regulations on carbon and mercury emissions and renewable portfolio standards, as well as the pressing need for additional transmission in the Northwest.

Travis McLing, who leads INL's carbon sequestration program, provided an overview of recently enacted and pending legislation on carbon emissions. He also discussed the status of technology for carbon capture and sequestration, estimated costs, and the myriad legal issues associated with ownership and liability. "Ratepayers will eventually bear the cost of carbon capture and storage," he said.

Western states are paving the way nationally on this front. But without federal legislation, costs are still prohibitive, and significant technical issues still must be resolved.

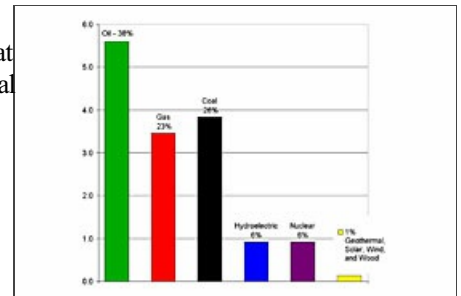
Nuclear energy also garnered attention at the conference. A keynote address by Jack Lance, who directs INL's Applied Engineering and Quality organization, posed the question, "Nuclear Power: Is it an Option for Idaho?" Lance outlined advances in reactor technology and design, the licensing process, industry alliances, government policy and public acceptance. While the perception of nuclear power has improved, public acceptance remains an important issue, as does cost of new facilities, financing and construction time, he said.

Some in the industry are making a business case for deploying small modular reactors (SMRs) in areas like the Intermountain West, Lance explained. SMRs offer a scalable alternative that may provide safety and water-use advantages, as well as a reduced financial risk for entry into nuclear power generation. But advantages may be offset by higher capital and operating costs per unit capacity compared to large, conventional reactors, as well as design certification and licensing barriers.

Such cost-benefit concerns are common with nearly every energy form. Paul Kjellander, administrator of [Idaho's Office of Energy Resources](#), spoke of the trade-offs the future holds in the energy arena. [Idaho's 2007 Energy Plan](#) calls for "a reliable, low-cost energy supply, protecting the environment, and promoting economic growth." But new generation resources carry a higher cost. And potential climate change legislation will lead to higher prices for ratepayers. Transmission is a widely acknowledged need, yet siting new transmission remains a contentious issue.

ICIE, formed in 1989, seeks to create support for factual discussion of environmental issues and to facilitate the use of sound science and facts in shaping public policy.

Additional sponsors of the Practical Paths conference included [Agrium](#), [Avista](#), [CH2M-WG Idaho](#), [Exergy Development Group of Idaho](#), [Holland and Hart](#), [Idaho Consumer Owned Utilities Association](#), [Idaho Farm Bureau Federation](#), [Idaho Grain Producers Association](#), [Knipe Land Company](#), [J.R. Simplot Company](#), [Monsanto Company](#), [Northwest Power and Conservation Council](#) and [Stoel Rives](#).



Conference participants discussed the fact that Americans rely on oil more than any other energy source.

View Lance's presentation, "[Nuclear Power: Is it an Option for Idaho?](#)"

View McLing's presentation, "[Practical Paths to Reliable Electricity.](#)"

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